

Summary Report Forest Plan Revision Public Meetings Alternatives Scoping

Convened by:

U.S. Forest Service, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit

**May 11, 2010
South Lake Tahoe, CA**

**May 13, 2010
North Lake Tahoe, CA**

**Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit
Forest Plan Revision**

June 11, 2010

PUBLIC MEETING PURPOSE

This report summarizes the key outcomes from two public meetings convened by the Forest Service, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (LTBMU). The first meeting was held on May 11, 2010 in South Lake Tahoe, California at the Forest Supervisor's Office. The second meeting was held on May 13, 2010 in the North Tahoe Conference Center at Kings Beach, California.

Following the publication of the Notice of Intent (NOI) in the Federal Register (Vol. 75, No. 53 / Friday, March 19, 2010 /pp. 13253-13254), the LTBMU is moving forward to revise the Forest Plan and prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

The information gathered at these meetings, as well as other feedback, will be used to inform the draft EIS and draft Forest Plan. It is anticipated that these draft documents will be released in the fall of 2010.

GOALS AND INTENDED OUTCOMES

The goal of both workshops was to inform the revision of the Forest Plan for the LTBMU. The primary objectives were:

- Provide a brief overview of plan revision process
- Provide a review of the revision schedule milestones
- Communicate the scope of revision
- Invite public input on potential alternative management direction for key issues

The meetings were designed to receive public input on potential building blocks of additional alternatives for three topic areas:

1. Watershed Health and Aquatic Habitat
2. Fuels, Forest Health and Terrestrial Habitat
3. Recreation

LTBMU Planning Staff will consider the public input provided as they develop the draft EIS and draft Forest Plan.

PARTICIPATION AND ORGANIZATION

Approximately 42 members of the public participated in the two workshops. The workshop opened with introductions of LTBMU staff. Next, the Deputy Forest Supervisor, Eli Ilano, presented an overview of the Forest Plan Revision process to date, described the key meeting objectives, and explained the meeting process. The presentation materials are available on the Forest Service website at fs.usda.gov/lbmu.

At the South Lake Tahoe meeting, the overview presentation was followed by organizing the participants into three breakout groups which rotated among the three Forest Plan Revision topics. Staff specialists presented overviews of each topic, focusing on the key differences between the 1988 Forest Plan as amended and the current draft of a new forest plan. Presentations were made on watershed health and aquatic habitats, forest health, fuels reduction and wildlife habitat, and recreation. The content of the topics presented at the North Lake Tahoe meeting was identical, but the forum was a single full group presentation, rather than three rotating breakout sessions.

Participants at each workshop session were encouraged to ask clarifying questions and then brainstorm a list of conceptual “building blocks” of additional alternatives. The essential question was: are there any concepts that we have missed? Those concepts or building blocks were captured on flipcharts and are presented within this summary report.

These building blocks are intended to foster further discussion, and may serve as the basis for additional alternatives considered in the draft environmental impact statement. Some concepts however, may be outside the scope of decisions made in a programmatic forest plan (e.g. site-specific decisions that are normally made at the project level).

This summary report represents our efforts to record and synthesize input received in both workshops. The focus of this report is on key forest plan related issues; it is not intended to serve as a full transcript of each comment and question made within the workshop sessions.

SUMMARY OF PRESENTATIONS

Watershed and Aquatic Habitats – No Action Alternative (1988 Forest Plan as Amended)

- Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment (SNFPA 2004) - substantial updates, integrated water quality and aquatic habitat strategy - Aquatic Management Strategy (AMS)
 - Amended Plan includes both Stream Environment Zones (SEZs) and Riparian Conservation Areas (RCAs) – can be confusing because areas overlap on ground
 - Includes designation of Critical Aquatic Refuges (CARs)
 - General direction for Lahontan Cutthroat Trout and Mountain Yellow-legged Frog recovery
- Does not address climate change
- Strong water quality focus throughout 1988 Plan, including SNFPA
 - SNFPA standards require participation in Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) development
 - Watershed restoration direction not very strong or well defined
 - Allows for livestock grazing on forested lands
- Limited management in SEZs; primarily to improve water quality
- Minimal direction for aquatic invasive species

Watershed and Aquatic Habitats - Current Draft

- Retain SNFPA Aquatic Management Strategy (AMS) concepts
 - Provide an integrated approach to restoring stream systems and aquatic habitats (SEZs)
 - Greater emphasis on aquatic habitat elements critical for species' life history - restore where deficient or not meeting desired conditions
 - Increase emphasis and specificity for Lahontan Cutthroat Trout and Mountain Yellow-legged Frog recovery
 - Maintain Critical Aquatic Refuges (CARs) under a different name
 - Drop RCAs, but retain management direction and apply to SEZs
- Expand Aquatic Management Strategy to address climate change
 - Build resilience into watershed systems so they can withstand changes that may accompany climate change (rain on snow events and longer, drier summers).
 - Increase emphasis on promoting water storage and habitat complexity in meadows and wetlands
- Continue water quality focus
 - Includes specific objectives for BMP effectiveness and Lake Tahoe TMDL implementation
 - BMP retrofits at recreation facilities
 - Road and trail Access and Travel Management (ATM) plans
 - Continued emphasis on stream restoration for water quality objectives

- New plan guidance for aquatic invasive species
 - Strategies for prevention of new infestations of aquatic invasive species
 - Work collaboratively to control or eradicate known populations

Vegetation and Wildlife - No Action (1988 Forest Plan as Amended)

- General Vegetation/Terrestrial Ecosystems
 - Emphasis on forest fuels reduction and habitat preservation. Manage terrestrial habitats by meeting minimum standards.
 - Minimum crown cover based on late seral-dependent species habitat needs—not specific to vegetation types
 - Allows (2004 SNFPA) and emphasizes (1988 LMP) timber salvage to recover value
 - Includes Old Forest Emphasis Areas (OFEAs) for preserving old growth
 - Emphasizes natural role of fire as an ecosystem process
- Does not address climate change
- Species Refuge Areas
 - Bald eagle management zone described
 - Detailed preservation approach (e.g. retention of minimum canopy cover) for managing northern goshawk and spotted owl Protected Activity Centers (PACs) and Home Range Core Areas (HRCAs) described
- Threatened and Endangered Species, Sensitive Species, and Management Indicator Species
 - Threatened and endangered species determined by USFWS.
 - Threatened Lahontan cutthroat trout identified for recovery action
 - Sensitive species determined by USFS Regional Forester list
 - Management indicator species determined by 2008 MIS Amendment
- Invasive Species
 - SNFPA (2004) provides direction for noxious weed management, but mostly silent on aquatic invasive species

Vegetation and Wildlife – Current Draft

- General Vegetation/Terrestrial Ecosystems
 - Greater emphasis on forest restoration toward desired conditions specific to vegetation types
 - Emphasis on integration of fuels, vegetation, and habitat management
 - Salvage considered only after protection/restoration needs Manage for preserving, promoting, and perpetuating the old growth condition wherever it occurs with provisions for connectivity
 - Emphasizes natural role of fire as an ecosystem process and provides more flexibility in managing wildfires
 - Emphasis on managing forest for increased resiliency to climate change

- Species Refuge Areas
 - No significant change to bald eagle management zone
 - Preservation approach retained to northern goshawk and spotted owl PACs and HRCAs with strategy more specific to Lake Tahoe Basin (e.g. east and west-side canopy closures) and greater flexibility to restore while maintaining (short term) or enhancing (long term) habitat suitability
- Threatened and Endangered Species, Sensitive Species, and Management Indicator Species
 - Greater emphasis and more contemporary approach to LCT recovery
 - No change to species lists
- Invasive Species
 - Greater emphasis on management of invasive species; addresses contemporary aquatic invasive species

Recreation - No Action Alternative (1988 Forest Plan as Amended)

Based primarily on the predicted condition that recreation use will continue to increase

- Developed Recreation Infrastructure - Expansion Emphasis
 - Expansion of developed recreation sites, alpine skiing facilities, and improvements to existing sites.
- Public Access
 - Trail Systems - Trail systems will be enlarged and trailhead parking facilities will be constructed.
 - Road Systems - Managed via Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM).
 - Designated routes & areas only using closed unless open concept.
 - Over Snow Vehicle (OSV) - Management follows Snowmobile Guide (2006)
 - Designates areas where snowmobiles and other over the snow vehicles are permitted and those areas closed to winter motorized use.
- Wilderness
 - There are portions of three congressionally designated wilderness areas within the LTBMU boundaries (Desolation, Granite Chief, and Mt. Rose).
- Wild and Scenic Rivers
 - Wild and Scenic River Eligibility - Follow the management requirements for the section of the Upper Truckee River that is eligible for the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. (1998 decision).

Recreation - Current Draft

Recreation direction for the current draft is based on moving toward sustainability, adapting to changing recreation trends and taking care of what we've got.

- Developed Recreation Infrastructure - Restoration and Sustainability Emphasis
 - Modify existing recreation sites and settings to compatible uses and to respond to future demands and trends. Expansion will be considered on a case by case basis.
 - Reduce the deferred maintenance backlog.
 - Multi-season – Allow developed resort areas and ski areas to move towards multi-season opportunities. BMP upgrades will continue.
 - Potential expansion of the use of concessionaires and other partnerships to improve facility maintenance and reduce the cost to government.
- Public Access
 - **Trail Systems** – Comprehensive planning for area-wide systems. Maximize connections, logical loops, and linkages.

- **Road Systems** - Emphasize multi-modal transportation and viable alternatives to the private automobile. Continue use of MVUM.
 - Over Snow Vehicle (OSV)
 - OSV - Implement 'Over Snow Vehicle Use Map' (OSVUM).
- Wilderness
 - Wilderness Evaluation - Evaluate lands for wilderness potential and, if determined to be appropriate by the responsible official, recommend for designation and provide management guidance.
- Wild and Scenic Rivers – no change from existing.

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS – KEY BUILDING BLOCKS

What have we missed?

Watershed Health and Aquatic Habitats Summary

Additional building blocks for alternatives provided by LTBMU staff at both meetings included:

- Restore aquatic habitats at the expense of recreation facilities and access

Building Blocks formulated from public comments captured at the meetings:

Aquatic Invasives

- ❖ Ensure that concessionaires control aquatic invasive species
- ❖ Emphasize environmental education on aquatic invasive species (control, prevention)
- ❖ Ensure that all boats at all facilities are washed – use volunteers if necessary

Water quality

- ❖ Accelerate (increase and expand) road removal
- ❖ Use a watershed planning approach for Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) implementation
- ❖ Include strong and specific language to ensure TMDL load reduction targets are met
- ❖ Include load reduction in monitoring plan and consider modeling project impacts
- ❖ More emphasis and detail on water quality (TMDL)
- ❖ Concern about reduced resource protection if Riparian Conservation Areas are dropped
- ❖ Build partnerships (to improve water quality) with private landowners whose properties are adjacent to streams; consider grants for funding.

Resource protection

- ❖ Prohibit snowmobiles in SEZs (especially meadows)
- ❖ Relocate trails out of meadows
- ❖ Ensure recreation does not impact biodiversity
- ❖ Include direction and emphasis on maintaining native fish populations (mountain whitefish, tui chub)
- ❖ Is integrated pest management addressed in current draft? Concern about use of pesticides.
- ❖ Ensure appropriate management of water flows in Echo Creek (FERC 184)
- ❖ Consider resource tradeoffs to accomplish work in Stream Environment Zones (SEZs) – short term impacts vs. long term benefits. Loosen restriction on working in SEZs
- ❖ Aggressive fuels work is needed – especially on the West Shore.

Vegetation and Wildlife Summary

Additional building blocks for alternatives provided by LTBMU staff at both meetings included:

- Light management/natural approach —concentrate community protection efforts immediately adjacent to communities. Elsewhere, allow nature to take its course.
- Retain/re-delineate Old Forest Emphasis Areas (part of no action)
- New species lists (Species of Interest, Species of Conceror other)—considered but outside scope of 2000 Planning Rule
- Increase the rate and scale — Rate and scale of current efforts will not be enough.
- Sierra Nevada scale/All lands —across jurisdictional boundaries
- Readiness for climate change — do we need to be more aggressive or proactive?

Building Blocks formulated from public comments captured at the meetings:

- ❖ Increase the rate and scale of fuels reduction, including the following sub-components:
 - Increase biomass utilization. Promote local cogeneration plants. Reduce pile burning.
 - Make fuelwood more available and accessible for local independent contractors. Use local independent contractors for thinning and fuels reduction.
 - Construct more temporary roads to increase accessibility.
 - Use more low-impact mechanized equipment for fuels treatment over hand thinning to increase rate.
- ❖ Integrate watershed management with fuels/vegetation/wildlife management
- ❖ Increase climate change readiness—consider pre-emptive management techniques (facilitated migration of wildlife).
- ❖ Support local independent contractors

Other

- Ensure consistency with other agencies for management approach to wildlife and TMDL.

Recreation Summary

Additional building blocks for alternatives provided by LTBMU staff at both meetings included:

- Reduce/Remove facilities in sensitive areas, and change use and management accordingly
- Allow for modifications to settings to respond to future demands and trends
- Separate user groups
 - Motorized/Nonmotorized
 - Mountain Bikes/Hikers
- Snowmobile Use
 - In Forest Plan or separate process

Building Blocks formulated from public comments captured at the meetings:

Use Conflicts

- ❖ Shared Use
 - Encourage shared use of recreation resources.
 - Continue shared Over Snow Vehicles (OSV) -cross-country skier use in Tahoe Meadows area.
- ❖ Increase behavior education to reduce use conflicts by reminding visitors about sharing thoughtfully. Teach ethics and conservation
- ❖ Separation of Use
 - Encourage separation of recreation use to minimize conflicts
 - Eliminate OSV use in Tahoe Meadows area

Access

- ❖ Increase the inventory of facilities, trails and roads to improve access to public lands
- ❖ Decrease the inventory of facilities, trails and roads to minimize impacts to public lands
- ❖ Encourage multimodal access to recreation sites
- ❖ Create connectivity, linkages, loops on system trails
- ❖ Cross jurisdictional access to Forest Service lands. (All Lands Approach)

Management and Planning

- ❖ Utilize “sense of place” to manage recreation use
- ❖ Specific recreation activities are looking for certain landscape attributes
- ❖ Area designation must match use requirements
- ❖ Assess trends, existing patterns, weigh the physical impacts against the biological impacts for better integration
- ❖ Improve enforcement capabilities
- ❖ Better utilize existing facilities, especially at low use seasons. For example, utilize snow-parks for summer access

Education

- ❖ Add more ‘invitations’ to experience the Wild and Scenic, Wilderness and remote sites, utilizing logical existing access routes
- ❖ Clarify and define motorized/non-motorized through signage and behavioral education, enforcement, and “boots on the ground”
- ❖ Encourage visitors to do the right thing.
- ❖ Improve “invitation” to public lands
- ❖ Increase environmental education and interpretation signage, programs, and facilities. Messages should focus on conservation and shared us recreation ethics/expectations.

Partnerships and volunteers

- ❖ Recruit and utilize more volunteers for the outdoor programs, maintenance and interpretation
- ❖ Encourage new business partnerships
- ❖ Increase partnership/volunteer/sponsorship arrangements to provide recreation opportunities and facility maintenance

NEXT STEPS IN THE FOREST PLANNING PROCESS

1. Forest Service planning staff will focus on incorporating the information presented in this report – in conjunction with additional input received to-date from the public, partner agency, and staff report data and comments– to craft alternatives to a proposed action. (Spring/Summer 2010)
2. Staff analysis of the affected environment, by resource, of the proposed action and alternative actions; internal review of all documents by regional and appropriate national staff prior to publication. (Summer/Fall 2010)
3. Publish draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) and draft revised Forest Plan. (Fall/Winter 2010)
4. Availability of documents will be announced with a published notice in the Federal Register, the newspaper of record (i.e. Tahoe Daily Tribune), notification sent to the Forest Plan Revision contact list, a public news release to local and regional media outlets, and an article on the LTBMU public website: <http://fs.usda.gov/lbmu>.
5. Documents will be published in print hardcopy, CD, and available to view online at the LTBMU public website.
6. A formal 90-day comment period will follow the documents' availability.
7. Formal content analysis of comments received from public, agency, and government letters will occur; appropriate changes to Forest Plan proposed action and plan components will be made. (Spring 2011)
8. Internal agency dissemination of Final EIS and Final Forest Plan; Record of Decision (ROD) drafted by local staff and Regional Forester - USFS Pacific Southwest Region. (Summer 2011)
9. Publish Final EIS, Final Forest Plan, and ROD (signed by Regional Forester – USFS Pacific Southwest Region).

Please send your suggestions, comments, and/or ideas to:

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